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THREE CHEERS FOR NANCY DETERT

Florida State Senator Nancy Detert is hardly a political superstar -- let alone a household name. Indeed, none but the geekiest of political wonks have likely ever heard of her. . . until this past Thursday. For this is the day that Senator Detert, a Republican from Venice -- over on Florida's west coast -- spoke a hard truth rarely heard in GOP circles, thereby distancing herself from the overwhelming majority of archconservatives who control the Florida legislature.



Sen. Nancy Detert

At issue was Senator Detert's film incentive bill -- [SB 1046](#) -- a measure which would revamp the way the state hands out tax credits to attract movie production companies to the Sunshine State. This is a major source of revenue and employment here in Florida. According to the Office of Film and Entertainment, which administers the state's tax credit program, Senator

Detert's original bill was responsible for 342 entertainment industry projects which led to \$1.5 billion being spent in Florida and nearly 172,000 jobs. Senator Detert's new bill provides a means for keeping the program -- which heretofore has proven to be a truly wise investment -- fully funded.

At first blush, passage of SB 1046 would seem to be a no-brainer; a win-win situation that creates lots of jobs for carpenters, electricians, actors, caterers etc., while bringing in a ton of revenue. What's not to like? Apparently something, because Skylar Zander, the Florida Deputy Director of the Koch Brother's-funded "Americans for Prosperity" [AFP] rose before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development to voice his group's strong opposition to Senator Detert's bill.

APF has long contended that Senator Detert is in the pocket of Hollywood moguls, and thinks nothing of enriching them at the expense of "hard-working Floridians." The group's disdain for the Venice Republican has led them to running negative television ads and sending out fliers blasting Detert for her voting record. Thus, when Zander rose to speak before the committee on SB 1046, Detert was ready with a political poke-in-the-ribs for which she should be applauded:

Addressing AFP's Skylar Zander, Senator Detert told the 23-year old lobbyist "You people serve absolutely no purpose." She then went on to rip the group for coming to committee meetings to "say meaningless things" and for having the word prosperity in their title when "obviously you're for prosperity for yourself and not other people in the industry." She then facetiously told Zander *"I appreciate the mailers you do against me on a monthly basis that say I give money to Hollywood moguls, which, of course, I don't have any money to give, and neither does the state of Florida give money to Hollywood moguls . . . You're called Americans for Prosperity - you're all on the Koch Brothers payroll. Good for you, I'm glad your employed."*



Zander then retorted that he "wished he got a ton of money from the Koch Brothers" but they're just one of thousands of donors to AFP. Senator Detert then asked who the donors were, but Zander said AFP doesn't share that data.

"You're not transparent with your data?" the senator asked in feigned shock. "We're not required to be," the young lobbyist responded, to which Senator Detert, looking at subcommittee chair Jack Latvala, a gleam in her eye, said "We could change that." At this point, amid derisive chuckling, the AFP's Zander left the speaker's podium, recognizing that he had been bested by the senator.

(It should be noted that when the skirmish was over, Senator Detert's bill easily passed the Appropriations Subcommittee. It is the second of three committee stops for the legislation.)

Without question, Senator Detert deserves three cheers and a round of applause for having the guts and integrity to speak truthfully about the brothers Koch and Americans for Prosperity. Oh, one could say that the only reason she did so is because they run ads against her . . . which is true: they *do* run ads against her. But *why* do they run ads and mail out fliers against her? Precisely because she believes that government *can* play a positive role in the creation of jobs and wealth . . . and not just by cutting taxes or eliminating regulations. In other words, Senator Detert has about her the redolence of old-time Republicanism -- that which allows that government can be a

positive force for good. Nowadays, of course, that sort of attitude is considered irredeemably,

unforgivably heretical by the party's billionaire underwriters. Already, there are rumblings and stirrings in Sarasota County from arch-conservatives seeking to attract both bucks and attention for a primary race against Senator Detert. Without a lot of support from people who normally would never give a moment's consideration to any Republican, she will go down in flames . . . one of the last of a dying breed. For Nancy Detert is most endangered of all political species: a moderate Republican. In addition to her sponsorship of S.B. 1046, Nancy Detert is pro-choice, anti-school vouchers and has sponsored legislation that would ban texting while driving. (Her bill was weakened by the Florida House of Representatives to say that "law enforcement could not look at a driver's cellphone to seek evidence of texting unless there was an accident with injuries or death.")

In railing against the Koch brothers and Americans for Prosperity, Senator Nancy Detert has shown herself to be a woman of courage and conviction. She appears to be a throwback; a legislator who believes that her greatest allegiance is to the mass of nameless, faceless constituents who cast ballots, and not the small handful of hyper-wealthy benefactors who write checks.

Back in 1968, a heck of a lot of the country's Democratic activists gladly made contributions for the first -- and perhaps only -- time to a Republican candidate: moderate California Senator Thomas Kuchel (1910-1994), who was locked in a primary fight-to-the death with arch conservative Dr. Max Rafferty (1917-1982). Many California Democrats actually registered to vote in the Republican primary in an effort to defeat Rafferty -- sort of the Louie Gohmert of his day. The feeling was that should Kuchel win the primary (which he did not), then Californians would be faced with a win-win situation in November: either the election of liberal Democrat Alan Cranston or, at worst the reelection of Senator Kuchel. I personally knew dozens of Democrats who registered as Republicans for the primary in order to vote for Senator Kuchel, then reregistered as Democrats for the general. (*Cranston wound up defeating Rafferty, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction with 52.4% of the vote. Upon leaving California and becoming Chancellor of Troy State University in Alabama, one wag noted "In leaving California and moving to Alabama, Dr. Rafferty manages to raise the I.Q. of both states simultaneously."*)

I for one would encourage Democrats to consider contributing to Senator Detert's primary fund and even registering to vote for her in the 2016 primary. Should she capture her primary, as with California nearly a half-century ago, voters would then at least be guaranteed representation by a rational moderate politician -- perhaps Republican, perhaps Democrat.

In any event, it is most appropriate to recognize Senator Nancy Detert for the courage it takes to speak out against billionaire troglodytes like the Kochs. For now, she is one of the few breaths of fresh air in Florida politics.

Hip, hip hurrah!

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